

Message Text

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60

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2855

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 4581

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, JM

SUBJECT: STATE OF EMERGENCY EXTENDED, AND DOUBTS GROW

REFERENCE: KINGSTON 4449

1. FOLLOWING LENGTHY DEBATE ON OCTOBER 19, THE JAMAICAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED A MOTION EXTENDING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, FIRST DECLARED ON JUNE 19, UP UNTIL FEBRUARY 28, 1977 (UNLESS EARLIER WITHDRAWN). IN THE COURSE OF THE DEBATE, THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY, KEBLE MUNN, LAUDED THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, CLAIMING THAT IT HAD LED TO A "CONSIDERABLE DECREASE" IN THE RATE OF VIOLENT CRIME IN JAMAICA. NOT ONLY WILL THIS DECLINE IN CRIME AID THE TOURISM INDUSTRY BUT -- AND HERE HE FLATFOOTEDLY REVEALED THAT THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD UNDER THE STATE OF EMERGENCY -- HE ADDED THAT POLLING UNDER THE JGOVERNMENT'S EXTRAORDINARY POWERS WILL BE "...BETTER CONTROLLED, MORE PEACEFUL AND SAFER ..."

2. IN ARGUING FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, MUNN LAPSED INTO A KIND OF SCHIZOPHRENIA WHEN HE SAID THAT DEVELOPMENTS OVER RECENT DAYS HAVE GIVEN INCREASED URGENCY

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TO THE NEED TO EXTEND THE GOVERNMENT'S EXTRAORDINARY

POWERS. HE POINTED TO THE RECENT UPSURGE IN CRIME AND ASSERTED THAT THERE ARE FORCES AT WORK IN THE COUNTRY WHICH ARE DETERMINED TO CAUSE UNREST. MUNN ADDED THAT MANY OF THE RECENT INCIDENTS HAD OCCURRED AT PUBLIC MEETINGS. (THE ONLY PUBLIC INCIDENT INVOLVING POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE IS THAT WHICH OCCURRED IN ST. ELIZABETH PARISH (SEE KINGSTON 4411) BUT, OVER OCTOBER 16-18 THREE-DAY WEEKEND, A HOLIDAY CALLED TO MARK JAMAICA'S "NATIONAL HERITAGE" AND TO HONOR HER "NATIONAL HEROES", IN KINGSTON ALONE SEVEN DIED AND ELEVEN WERE HOSPITALIZED AS THE RESULT OF SHOOTINGS. IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT IS AGAIN REQUIRED TO RELY ON CURFEWS IN PARTS OF WEST KINGSTON; ONE AREA WAS UNDER CURFEW FOR A FULL TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. THE MINISTER WAS UNABLE TO ESCAPE A MEASURE OF CRITICISM FOR ATTEMPTING TO JUSTIFY EXTENSION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY ON THE GROUNDS OF SIMULTANEOUS CLAIMS OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

3. WHILE THE MOTION EXTENDING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY PASSED WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, THE GOVERNMENT'S USE OF ITS EXTRAORDINARY POWERS WERE CLOSELY QUESTIONED BY THE OPPOSITION. MUCH OF THE QUESTIONING FOCUSED ON: (A) THE LIMITED ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIRED OF THE MINISTER AND THE SECURITY FORCES; AND (B) THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (JLP) NOW DETAINED. THESE EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN REGARDING THE POSSIBLE ABUSE BY GOVERNMENT OF ITS POWERS HAVE LED OTHERS TO QUESTION THE WISDOM OF RETAINING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. COLUMNIST MORRIS CARGILL, WRITING UNDER HIS PSEUDONYM "THOMAS WRIGHT" IN THE OCTOBER 20 GLEANER, SAID THAT WHATEVER NEED THERE MAY ORIGINALLY HAVE BEEN FOR THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, THE GOVERNMENT, BY ABUSING ITS EXTRAORDINARY POWERS, HAS BEGUN TO TRANSFORM JAMAICA INTO A POLICE STATE. UNLESS THE STATE OF EMERGENCY IS PROMPTLY TERMINATED, HE WROTE, "...THE ABUSE (OF THOSE POWERS) WILL PROLIFERATE AND, WHAT IS MORE, THOSE IN AUTHORITY WILL BECOME TOO COMPLACENT AND TOO CONTENT WITH THE POWERS THEY OUGHT NOT TO POSSESS." CLEARLY REFERRING TO THE RECENT UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE, HE WENT ON TO SAY, "IF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS NOT YET MANAGED TO CONTROL CRIME, IT NEVER WILL; AND WE SHALL FIND OURSELVES, NOT THE CRIMINALS, INCREASINGLY THE SUBJECTS OF SUPPRESSION..."

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4. CARGILL, LIKE MANY OTHER THOUGHTFUL JAMAICANS, IS WORRIED BY THE EFFECT OF THE UNUSUAL DEMANDS BEING PLACED ON THE SECURITY FORCES -- I.E., THE POLICE AND THE JAMAICA DEFENSE FORCE (JDF) -- BY THE CONTINUING STATE OF EMERGENCY. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE GROWN WEARY AND HAVE DISPLAYED A GROWING PROPENSITY TO USE FAR GREATER FORCE THAN MAY BE WARRANTED BY CIRCUMSTANCES. ANOTHER COMMENTATOR, DAVID DA COSTA WHO WRITES AS "MALCOLM SHARP", USED HIS OCTOBER 18 COLUMN IN THE GLEANER TO NOTE HIS INCREASING

CONCERN OVER THE PUBLIC'S MOUNTING DISRESPECT FOR THE LAW.
MOST PARTICULARLY, HE SEES SUCH USE OF EXCESSIVE FORCE
ERODING THE ABILITY OF VIOLENCE TO SHOCK THE PUBLIC AND, WITH
AN ELECTION APPROACHING WHICH IS CERTAIN TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY
AROUSSED PASSIONS, SEES THE PROGNOSIS AS MORE TROUBLE, NOT LESS.
DORRANCE

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